

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3207

INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION USUN NY

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 3134

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, AG, MO, SP, SS

SUBJ: SPANISH SAHARA: THE ALGERIAN ANGLE

REF: ALGIERS 3130

1. SUMMARY. IN CONVERSATION OCT. 20, FONMIN SECY GEN BENHABYLES; EMPHASIZED GOA SATISFACTION WITH ICJ AND UN COMMISSION FINDINGS; NOTED DEVELOPMENT OF GENUINE SAHRAOUI INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT; TERMED INTERIM SPANISH ROLE FOLLOWED BY REFERENDUM AS LOGICAL EVOLUTION OF SITUATION; AND EXPRESSED PUZZLEMENT WITH MOROCCAN MOVE. HEAVY PRESS TREATMENT HAS SOUGHT TO LINK MOROCCAN POLICY WITH IMPERIALISM AND TO PLAY UP APPEAL BEYOND GOM TO MOROCCAN PEOPLE ON SELF-DETERMINATION ISSUE. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING DINNER HE GAVE FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON OCT. 20, FONMIN SECY GEN BENHABYLES MADE FOLLOWING POINTS IN EXTENSIVE LOW-KEY PRESENTATION ON SAHARA:

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A. ALGERIAN HAS CONSISTENTLY STOOD FOR SELF-DETERMINATION, IN SAHARA AND ELSEWHERE, AND THUS MOST SATISFIED WITH ICJ AND UN COMMISSION'S FINDINGS.

B. ALGERIAN HAS NO TERRITORIAL ASPIRATIONS IN COLONY AND IS NOT THEREFORE IN CONFLICT WITH MOROCCANS, AS SOME PROPAGANDA WOULD INDICATE. CONFLICT, IT SEEMS, WOULD BE BETWEEN RIVAL CLAIMANTS, I.E. MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA.

C. WITH RESPECT TO HISTORICAL LINKS IN REGION, IDEA OF MODERN NATION-STATE IS RELATIVE NEWCOMER IN NORTH AFRICA. BOUNDARIES NEVER DEFINED AND GENERAL SIZE OF COUNTRY HAS DEPENDED ON POWER AND INFLUENCE OF PARTICULAR RULERS AND TRIBAL LOYALTIES. THUS, ICJ HAS NOTED SAHARA'S TRIBAL LINKS NOT ONLY WITH MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA BUT WITH ALGERIA AS WELL.

D. PAST MONTHS HAVE SEEN DEVELOPMENT OF GENUINE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT IN SAHARA. SUCH DEVELOPMENT ALMOST INEVITABLE WHENEVER COLONIAL POWER ANNOUNCES INTENTION TO WITHDRAW FROM A COLONY, AND SAHARA NO EXCEPTION. PROPAGANDA TO EFFECT THAT F POLISARIO MERELY A CREATION OF ALGERIA OBVIOUSLY FALSE.

E. LOGICAL EVOLUTION OF SITUATION WOULD BE TRANSITION PERIOD IN WHICH SPANISH WOULD PLAY CONSIDERABLE ROLE, PARTICULARLY IN ECONOMIC DOMAIN. THEN, UNDER PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION, REFERENDUM COULD TAKE PLACE, WITH CONCEIVABLE OPTION BY PEOPLE TO UNITE TERRITORY WITH MOROCCO AND/OR MAURITANIA. PROBLEM OF REFUGEE PARTICIPATION IN REFERENDUM COULD BE SOLVED BY IMPARTIAL AUTHORITY (PRESUMABLY UN) WHICH WOULD EXAMINE STRENGTH OF TIES TO SAHARA OF PERSONS CLAIMING REFUGEE STATUS AND PASS JUDGMENT. REFUGEE PROBLEM, IN OTHER WORDS, COULD BE SOLVED WITH RELATIVE EASE.

F. MOROCCO POSITION DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND. AT SAME TIME AS MARCH ORGANIZED, GOM HAD SUMMONED
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ARAB AND AFRICAN AMBASSADORS, INCLUDING ALGERIAN, AND REQUESTED THAT DELEGATIONS BE DISPATCHED TO SUPPORT MOROCCAN MARCH. (ALGERIAN PRESENT AT DINNER NOTED WRYLY THAT GOA MIGHT WISH SEND ITS DELEGATION VIA TINDOUF.)

G. TO SUM UP, MOROCCO HAD CREATED SITUATION WHICH IS DANGEROUS AND CONSEQUENCES OF WHICH CANNOT BE

FORESEEN.

3. ALGERIAN DIPLOMATIC AND PROPAGANDA ACTIVITY INCREASING.
ON OCT. 20 FOREIGN MINISTRY SUMMONED AFRICAN, ARAB AND ISLAMIC
LEAGUE AMBASSADORS TO REVIEW SAHARA SITUATION. NEITHER PRESS
NOR BENHABYLES PROVIDED ANY SUBSTANTIVE
ACCOUNT OF THIS MEETING.

4. MEDIA TREATMENT OF PROBLEM HEAVY.
PRESS CARRIED SECOND DEMAND, THIS TIME FROM ALGERIAN
TRADE UNION,, THAT SAHRAOUI BROTHERS BE ALLOWED RIGHT
TO SELF-DETERMINATION. F POLISARIO AND SAHRAOUI
NATIONAL UNITY PARTY (PUNS) APPEALS TO UN, ARABS,
AFRICANS, AND COUNTRIES REPRESENTED ON UN COMMISSION
ALSO TREATED PROMINENTLY. F POLISARIO, ACCORDING TO
PRESS, HAD: A) CLAIMED TO HAVE CAPTURED THREE MOROCCAN
SOLDIERS, B) REPORTED "MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE
OF 200 SAHRAOUI REFUGEES AND FLIGHT OF NUMEROUS
OTHERS FROM CAMPS IN MOROCCO," AND C) CALLED UPON
MOROCCAN PEOPLE BOTH TO STICK WITH SAHRAOUI PEOPLE
IN ITS ARMED STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE AND TO SHOW
SOLIDARITY WITH SAHARAN REFUGEES AGAINST REACTIONARY
EXPANSIONISTS. NUANCED LIBYAN STATEMENT THAT " VOICE
OF SAHRAOUI AND THOSE WHO HAVE TAKEN UP ARMS MUST
BE HEARD." THRUST OF PRESS TREATMENT HAS BEEN TO
LINK MOROCCAN MOVE WITH IMPERIALISM AND TO BROADCAST
APPEAL BEYOND GOM TO MOROCCAN PEOPLE.

5. DETAILED NEWS COVERAGE OF SAHARA SITUATION
INCLUDED SPANISH REPORT THAT NORTHERN SAHARA HAD
BEEN MINED.

6. COMMENT: ALGERIAN ACTING MORE AND MORE LIKE
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INTERESTED PARTY AND MAY BE EXPECTED TO INCREASE. ITS
DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES IN COMING DAYS. BENHABYLES IS
SECOND ALGERIAN OFFICIAL IN RECENT DAYS TO HAVE RAISED
WITH US POSSIBILITY OF SPANISH PARTICIPATION IN SOME
SORT OF TRANSITIONAL REGIME IN SAHARA.

7. ALGERIAN MEDIA TREATMENT OF SAHARA MUCH HEAVIER
THAN PREVIOUSLY. LIGHTNESS OF PRESS COVERAGE DURING
PAST FEW WEEKS HAS SEEMED ALMOST STUDIED. NOW,
ALTHOUGH COMMUNAL ELECTIONS STILL TAKE PRECEDENCE,
PROPAGANDA MACHINE SERIOUSLY ENGAGED IN NEW ANTI-
IMPERIALIST CRUSADE.
PARKER

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